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IN THE PAPER TODAY

Safe fun: Farmington Hills firefighters hosted an open house — but focused on safety./A8

COUNTY

Having a heart: Walkers took to the Detroit Zoo Saturday with a message and hearts full of courage./A11

BELIEFS & VALUES

Uplifting: Jews will gather on Friday for Kol Nidre, the sacred chant that begins Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement)./B7

COMMUNITY LIFE

Helpful bite: Eating Mexican food can help fund a Farmington Hills family's drive to find a cure for an eye disease./B1

SPORTS

Champs: Farmington Hills Mercy edged defending state champs Seaholm to win the all-Oakland County girls swimming and diving meet./C1

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Glory days



Falcon spirit: Farmington High School celebrated its homecoming Saturday. At top, students wear their loyalty with pride. Above, homecoming queen Natalie Dawson gets a hug from her father, Kenneth, while Falcon player and homecoming king Tim Kirby, at left, watches. For more on the festivities, please turn to Page A4. For more on the game, please see today's sports section.

Hills snubs firm's tax cut

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER



A Farmington Hills company that's smitten by the tax-friendly lure of another community is not going to get city council's blessing.

In fact, Farmington Hills city council members reaffirmed their stand against granting exit permits to companies leaving to get a tax break during a study session Monday. City Council is expected to talk about the proposed move by Hella North America Inc. to Plymouth Township at Monday's regular meeting.

Hella wants to move operations and up to 35 jobs to the Wayne County community, which offers tax breaks to new companies. It's not loss of jobs or tax revenue but the principle behind such moves that drew council's ire, members said.

Oakland County Jobs Commission, County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and the Governor's office have lobbied Farmington Hills council to approve an exit permit, which is required by state law in order for a company to receive a tax break in another community. That doesn't appear likely to happen, though.

Even if it was Pontiac or Royal Oak Township — older communities where it would bring industry — I'd have no problem with it," said Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi. "It's just these newer communities that don't need to offer tax breaks to attract businesses that bug us."

Councilwoman Vicki Barnett is adamant, citing 6 mills in school taxes that are eliminated by the state and then made up for by the rest of the state's taxpayers.

"When they put the onus on every taxpayer in the state, that's wrong," Barnett said.

Farmington Hills Economic Development Corporation board recommended the council deny the request after a presentation by Hella representatives. The issue might not be as black and white, though.

Three-fourths of the space at the company's facility on Haggerty Road is occupied by North American Lighting, which Hella is

Please see TAX CUT, A2

Natural lock

Hills voters to decide on keeping Woodland Hills strictly a park

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Next month, voters will be asked to approve something that to most is a foregone conclusion: Woodland Hills Nature Park will remain — as the name suggests — a natural setting. Along with renewing Farmington Hills' parks and recreation millage on Nov. 4, voters will also be able to amend the city's charter to underscore the purpose of the park off Farmington Road.

A separate ballot question is a necessity, said Jeff Stewart, who is heading "Say Yes to Woodland Hills" campaign.

"You don't have Central Park in New York City by accident," said Stewart, who serves on the city's beautification, parks and recreation and 25th anniversary committees.

A charter amendment will likely deter any fleeting attempts to reshape the park in the future, Stewart said. A

three-fourths vote by city council or petition drive is first needed to seek a charter change, which subsequently has to be approved by voters.

What is well-conceived that Woodland Hills remain for nature only, "this further cements the deal," Stewart said.

"We adopted an ordinance," said Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi. "The feeling on council was we would put it in the charter because the charter is the hardest to change. We felt with the change (in the charter) it would offer further protection."

What the amendment would protect is five trails totaling 1.7 miles, meadows and wetlands as well as the city's tallest waterfall.

Deer, fox, squirrels, rabbits, raccoons and skunks share the 78 acres of park land with cross country skiers, nature walkers and lunch hour dwellers. Woodland Hills became reality through

Please see PARK, A6

Traffic trouble tops in both Hills, WB

By GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Several board members were late for the joint meeting held Monday by the West Bloomfield township board and Farmington Hills city council.

They were held up in traffic. That reflected the key issue that was brought up by members of both boards and the 50 or so citizens who crammed in and around the meeting room in West Bloomfield Town Hall.

"The largest issue is traffic," said township Supervisor Jedy Hood. "That will drive the process. Is it ever going to get better at 5:30 in the afternoon? Probably never. We're going to have to face that."

Concerns about traffic are rising because of the major developments planned for the intersection of 14 Mile, Orchard Lake and North-western Highway.

Farmington Hills has a 76-acre tract at the southeast corner of the

More talks to come

Farmington Hills and West Bloomfield will have another chance to discuss issues when they meet together again at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 12, in Farmington Hills city offices.

intersection which will be redeveloped for housing, shops and a Super-Kmart.

West Bloomfield is planning to develop a 65-acre tract at the northwest corner for housing and businesses.

The meeting was called by the two boards to help coordinate development at the intersection so they can jointly tackle such issues as traffic, infrastructure and building design.

This initial meeting, however, did not deal in specifics other than what already is planned.

Please see TRAFFIC, A6

Stolen car hits 110 mph, then crashes

2 arrested after fire on M-5

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Hills police had two Detroit men in custody after a high-speed chase ended in a rollover accident on M-5 early Tuesday morning.

Hills police pursued the white 1997 Chevy Conversion van after the vehicle fled when stopped by Novi police on Grand River and Meadowbrook around 12:30 a.m. Novi police pulled over the van on a report of two men walking around the lot at Marty Feldman Chevrolet on the 42000 block of Grand River.

"Our officer was alert in that he monitored it and that he saw the vehicle," said Chuck Nebus, Hills police commander.

"In this particular situation, it's near one in the morning and traffic is extremely light. Our only chase was on the freeway. Our chase was very short and certainly according to the book and our policies."

A Farmington Hills police patrol car started the chase after the van was seen traveling 63 miles an hour on eastbound Grand River before entering M-5 where the vehicle reached speeds of 110 miles an hour. The van suddenly exited onto northbound Farmington Road and turned into the Clark gas station where it proceeded westbound on Nine Mile before traveling the wrong way up the M-5 exit ramp.

Once on the highway, the van crossed the grassy median in an attempt to go west but

Please see CRASH, A6

Ready to salute

The city of Farmington Hills will present "Stars and Stripes Forever," at 11 a.m. Friday, Nov. 7, in honor of Veterans' Day.

Senior citizens age 55 and better are invited to join the festivities which will include a Sentimental Journey through the 1940s, a remembrance ceremony honoring all veterans, a live "big band" playing music of the era, a military ceremony featuring Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi and a full rump beef dinner.

Tickets are only \$2, but they're limited to the first 300 sold. It'll be held at the senior adult center at the William Costick Center.

The event is sponsored by the City of Farmington Hills and The Heatherwood retirement community in Southfield. Honorary chairman is "Uncle Jack" Curd.

For more information, call 473-1830.

FARMINGTON FOCUS

Pass the humor, please

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce hopes its members will be laughing out loud this afternoon.

The chamber's monthly membership lunch will feature the theme "The Magic of Humor: How Laughter Can Help You Best Stress," at 11:30 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 9, at Vladimir's in Farmington Hills.

Tickets are \$15 and lunch includes chicken cordon bleu, tossed salad, oven roasted potatoes, green beans, apple pie and coffee or tea. Call 474-3440, ext. 21 for reservations. Members are encouraged to bring along a guest for a chance to win five valuable prizes.

prizes.

Honoring a great man

When the Economic Development Corporation dedicated the "Farmington Hills Welcomes You" sign and memorial plaque a couple weeks ago, city officials and family remembered Keith Deacon.

Deacon, a former Farmington Hills mayor, charter commission member, zoning board member and chairman of the EDC, died in February.

"Keith was a great man. He was committed to his family, his church and his community," said Howard Gray, a longtime friend and EDC secretary. "He was concerned about the congestion at the M-5/Grand River (Halsted) intersection and its effect on the tax base. He spearheaded the drive for improvements to this area."